

Amendments to the Claims:

Please substitute the following clean copy text for the pending claims of the same number.

Claims 1-12 (canceled)

Claim 13 (currently amended): A vacuum system, comprising:

a first vacuum component having a first flange;

a second vacuum component having a second flange;

a first clamp member capable of being secured around the perimeter of the first flange, the first clamp member having a first contact surface and a first coupling opening;

a second clamp member capable of being secured around the perimeter of the second flange, the second clamp member having a second contact surface and a second coupling opening;

a lap joint circumferentially connecting two halves of the first clamp members with a fastening member; and

a coupling member insertable through the first and second coupling openings, the coupling member capable of providing a compressive force to urge the first contact surface to come into contact with the second contact surface, the coupling member orthogonally oriented to the fastening member.

Claim 14 (previously presented): The vacuum system of claim 13, wherein the first vacuum flange has a groove along a peripheral edge.

Claim 15 (previously presented): The vacuum system of claim 14, further comprising a bead on the first clamp member that engages the groove on the first vacuum flange.

Claim 16 (previously presented): The vacuum system of claim 13, wherein the second vacuum flange has a groove along a peripheral edge.

Claim 17 (previously presented): The vacuum system of claim 16, further comprising a bead on the second clamp member that engages the groove on the second vacuum flange.

Claim 18 (previously presented): The vacuum system of claim 13, wherein the coupling member is a threaded fastener that extends between the first clamp member and the second clamp member.

Claim 19 (previously presented): The vacuum system of claim 13, wherein the first coupling opening has internal threads that cooperate with the coupling member.

Claim 20 (previously presented): The vacuum system of claim 13, wherein the first clamp member is comprised of two or more identical parts.

Claim 21 (currently amended): A vacuum system, comprising:

a first vacuum component having a first flange;

a second vacuum component having a second flange;

a first clamp member capable of being secured around the perimeter of the first flange, the first clamp member having a first contact surface and a first coupling opening;

a second clamp member capable of being secured around the perimeter of the second flange, the second clamp member having a second contact surface and a second coupling opening;

a lap joint circumferentially connecting two halves of the first clamp members with a fastening member;

a coupling member insertable through the first and second coupling openings; and

a third vacuum component disposed between the first vacuum component and the second vacuum component, and whereby coupling the first clamp member and the second clamp member seals the first vacuum component to a first portion of the third vacuum component and seals the second vacuum component to a second portion of the third vacuum system component.

Claim 22 (previously presented): The vacuum system of claim 21, wherein the coupling member provides a compressive force to urge the first contact surface to come into contact with the first vacuum component.

Claim 23 (previously presented): The vacuum system of claim 21, wherein the first vacuum flange has a groove along a peripheral edge.

Claim 24 (previously presented): The vacuum system of claim 23, further comprising a bead on the first clamp member that engages the groove on the first vacuum flange.

Claim 25 (previously presented): The vacuum system of claim 21, wherein the second vacuum flange has a groove along a peripheral edge.

Claim 26 (previously presented): The vacuum system of claim 25, further comprising a bead on the second clamp member that engages the groove on the second vacuum flange.

Claim 27 (previously presented): The vacuum system of claim 21, wherein the coupling member is a threaded fastener that extends between the first clamp member and the second clamp member.

Claim 28 (previously presented): The vacuum system of claim 21, wherein the first coupling opening has internal threads that cooperate with the coupling member.

Claim 29 (previously presented): The vacuum system of claim 21, wherein the first clamp member is comprised of two or more identical parts.

Claim 30 (currently amended): A vacuum system for coupling a first vacuum component with a flange to a second vacuum component with a flange, comprising:

a first clamping means for securing around the perimeter of the first flange, a fastening means circumferentially connecting two halves of the first clamping means; the first clamp means having a first contact surface and a first coupling opening;

a second clamping means for securing around the perimeter of the second flange, the second clamp means having a second contact surface and a second coupling opening; and

a coupling means for urging the first contact surface to come into contact with the second contact surface, the coupling means insertable through the first and second coupling openings.

Claim 31 (previously presented): The vacuum system of claim 30, further comprising a third vacuum component disposed between the first vacuum component and the second vacuum component, and whereby coupling the first clamping means and the second clamping means seals the first vacuum component to a first portion of the third vacuum component and seals the second vacuum component to a second portion of the third vacuum system component.

Claim 32 (previously presented): The vacuum system of claim 30, wherein the coupling means is a threaded fastener that extends between the first clamping means and the second clamping means.